

**Testimony about Bilingual Education in Connecticut**  
**1/28/2014**  
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The problems of bilingual education in Connecticut may seem complex,  
yet the solutions are (quite) simple.

**Problem #1: The current policy of using higher-stakes standardized test scores as the primary evidence for school and teacher accountability is a policy that labels non-native English speaking students as deficits.** As student demographics continue to be a far greater predictor of standardized test score performance than school quality, many schools are “failing” for no other reason than the fact that world language fluency is not valued on higher-stakes standardized tests.

*Hispanic students in Connecticut, in particular, are one of the most disadvantaged groups in this test-driven policy as they have little chance (vastly underrepresented) of attending any of the “top” performance schools and are unfairly overrepresented in the “bottom” performing schools simply because their language is not valued in the current (and new) test-driven school accountability system, see Table 1.*

Table 1.

How Higher-Stakes Standardized Test Scores Are Associated with Race / Ethnicity and Home Language in Connecticut Public Schools, 2012.

Top Performing Schools	% Hispanic	% Non-English Home Language	Bottom Performing Schools	% Hispanic	% Non-English Home Language
West (New Canaan)	3	3	Walsh (Watertown)	54	13
Veterans Park (Ridgefield)	4.3	3	Bryant (Bridgeport)	46	48
North Mianus	10	14	Betances (Hartford)	76	56
Ryerson (Madison)	.4	2	Milner (Hartford)	39	37
Booth Free (Roxbury)	7	0	Rosevelt (Bridgeport)	54	38

Note: Achievement taken from Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), 2012.

Poverty data taken from Connecticut's 2012 School Report Cards.

**Solution #1: It is simply bad policy to continue to use higher-stakes standardized tests to hold teachers and schools accountable for differences in student demographics and home language spoken. It is time for Connecticut to move towards district regionalization with an economically integrated bussing system and to value world language fluency in how school quality is evaluated.**

**Problem#2: Connecticut is quickly becoming a place where White children are taught Spanish in affluent communities, but Hispanic children in poor, urban communities are not.** Nearly all “top performing” schools enroll mostly all-White, affluent students and offer formal instruction in Spanish starting at the earliest grades; meanwhile, *NONE of the “lowest performing schools” offer any world languages*, see table below. ***Essentially, Connecticut has a Bilingual policy that is Robin Hood in Reverse*** - Give to the rich, take from the poor?

**“Top” Performing Schools in Connecticut Offer Formal Instruction in Spanish**

School	World Language Policy (according to 2012 Strategic School Profile)
Booth	“Formal instruction (at least 1 hour per week) in Spanish starts in Grade K in this school.
Ryerson	“Formal instruction (at least 1 hour per week) in Spanish starts in Grade 1 in this school.”
North Mianus	“Formal instruction (at least 1 hour per week) in Spanish starts in Grade 3 in this school.”
West	“Formal instruction (at least 1 hour per week) in Spanish starts in Grade K in this school.”

**“Bottom” Performing Schools in Connecticut DO NOT Offer Formal Instruction in Spanish**

School	World Language Policy (according to 2012 Strategic School Profile)
Roosevelt	“Formal instruction in a world language <b>is not offered</b> in this school.”
Milner	“Formal instruction in a world language <b>is not offered</b> in this school.”
Betances	“Formal instruction in a world language <b>is not offered</b> in this school.”
Bryant	“Formal instruction in a world language <b>is not offered</b> in this school.”
Walsh	“Formal instruction in a world language <b>is not offered</b> in this school.”

**Solution #2: Treat native Spanish speakers at assets by building dual-language, inter-district magnet Schools across Connecticut.** By collaborating with local communities, give parents and teachers the option to redesign all low-performing schools into dual-language inter-district magnet schools. Dual Language Schools are a research-based turnaround model, charter schools are not. Inter-district dual-language schools will attract more affluent suburban parents, making desegregation efforts more effective. Charter schools will not. *All children deserve world language instruction at the earliest grades, especially bilingual students.*

**Problem #3: Connecticut cannot create or regulate any meaningful bilingual policy with only employing one full-time bilingual consultant for the entire state.** The recent decision to close Diloreto Dual Language Magnet School (New Britain) is the unfortunate example of bad policy combined with a lack of ability to regulate and enforce effective bilingual education by the State Department of Education. With assistance from the State, the school simply could have become an inter-district magnet school (as mentioned above), but instead the New Britain superintendent decided to replace the program with the non-empirically supported English Language Development curriculum and the State Department of Education supported it.

**Solution #3: Hire the number of bilingual consultants needed to effectively develop and regulate meaningful bilingual policy.**